

**Early Learning Council
Small Group Flip Chart Notes
September 28, 2005**

Early Learning Vision and Goals

Follow school readiness vision.

- 1) Parents and communities along with public and private systems collaborate to ensure that every child in Washington State is prepared from birth to succeed in school and life.
- 2) Washington State has a collaborative early childhood system from birth that provides parents and communities with the information and services they need so that children are ready for school.
- 3) To create a sustainable, integrated and accessible early learning (system-services enterprise resources) that provides parents, families, caregivers and communities in Washington State with the information, support and services they need to help young children succeed in school and life.
- 4) That every child is prepared from birth to succeed in (school and) life.

Outcomes

- Improved coordination across systems...collaboration (public and private)...(local, state and federal)
- All kids are ready for school, and schools are ready for kids...families and communities have what they all need to help kids be ready for school.
- Teachers of young children have the training and support they need to help kids be school ready.
- All of this is appropriately funded with public and private finance, support, and engagement.
- An informal market place/public supports quality early learning.
- Reflective of each child and family's culture...whole child (social, emotional, cognitive, physical)
- Parents are part of decision-making
- The new governance structure is accountable for measurable results (outcomes are measured for children/families, organizations, system)
- Increase parent choice—menu of comprehensive services to choose from
- That nothing punitive for families and communities comes of this effort (rating system)
- Language and culture are considered in identifying, stating the vision.
- How can perspectives be broadened? Perspectives should be broadened to promote inclusive system. We need to establish a protocol for inclusion.
- That every child is prepared from birth to succeed in (every community's definition of success can be different):
 - o Educational attainment
 - o Economic self-sufficiency

- o Citizenship
- o Healthy relationships
- o Health/wellness

Governance

Q1-What governance options would provide high visibility and independence for early learning?

Group 1

- Cabinet level/separate department
- Local presence also
- Linkages, simple access
- Less paperwork, provider focus (military—a good model)
- Relationship with other parts besides ECEAP and child care (Head Start, R&R, Health, other)
- More subsidies to support quality
- Local control
- Comprehensive family supports (mental health, etc.)
- Strong linkages to state departments and communities, family systems, home visitation

Group 2

- New agency: what's the purpose?
- Will agency provide “governance” we want?
 - o Integrated; standards-based
 - o Public-private partnership
- Is visibility the purpose?
 - o Does that accomplish goals?
 - o Needs resources
 - o Shouldn't be the goal
 - o Need governance for outcomes
- Unique that governor is behind it; Gates; Boeing—opportunity for advocacy/real political will; “stars are aligned” after years of effort
- Government: lots of places touch children; need to bring together; reasonable, defensible, doable; others, linkage is the key (e.g., health won't go under Education but must be at the table)
- Agency—Early Learning; direct tie which links other parts
- Washington Learns Committee: boundaries are a problem; expensive, less effective
 - o What about one educational model? Birth to higher education? Concern: Early learning wouldn't get enough attention; first, early learning increase attention on own, later, combine
 - o But new Early Learning = new silo
- Child care needs increased priority and opportunity for change

Q2-What steps should be taken to ensure that children and families are the central focus in our early learning model?

Group 1

- Incorporate resource and referral with family support (Oregon model)
- Department of Early Care and Learning focus
- Change state law—constitutional responsibility starts at age 8

Q3-How do we incorporate public-private partnerships into the governance structure?

Group 1

- Avoid commissioner appointed by Board
- Board (DOT model?) would involve public/private partnerships vs. governor appointment
- Source of funds is public/private
- If schools are local/community focused, then better fit
- What if school system (private?) doesn't include first grade? Can't license kindergarten per OSPI. Should OSPI take on all kindergartens? Look at gap (public, private)
- Bring in many kindergarten models representing different education models and values systems (no curriculum mandates now)
- Partner at local and state levels (e.g., ESDs)
- Public authority? Advisory board? Strong partnership
- Early childhood providers

Q4-What programs and funding streams belong?

Group 1 (at a minimum those starred)

- Child care subsidies and quality*
- R&R*
- ECEAP*
- Family support (home visiting, parent resources)
- Head Start*
- Early Head Start*
- Child Care licensing, improvement*
- State DOH health (*manageable chunk? Bring in longer range?*) (local public health, First Steps, Healthy Child Care Washington, immunizations)
- Agency and cabinet council or coordinating mechanism
- Board with representatives from K-12 and higher education
- Ties to OSPI-special education, CPS, Health (*can work well; don't have to move if more accountable*)
- Higher education—teacher training; parent support and development (community colleges); DSHS training program*
- Local public schools—family support centers (not under but co-located)
- Birth to 3 currently in OSPI and DSHS

Group 2

- Put K-3 in it! Issue-private vs. public \$ in system
- DCCEL-DSHS division; licensing, subsidy/policy, quality dollars, Head Start-State Collaboration Office
- ECEAP preschool (CTED)
- Federal food \$ (USDA)—child care; culturally sensitive menus
- Special education preschool (in OSPI)
- Title I services (federal dollars to states for low-income; dollars block grant to OSPI to school districts)
- ITEIP-early intervention (Birth to 3) (in DSHS but not DCCEL)
- Migrant, bilingual, native American dollars
- Even Start
- Question: State level change/departments—how connect with local communities? (Example: LaConnor-dollars to start local early learning programs, school districts turning down; concerns/questions about local connection—connect with schools and school boards)
- Must tie in with sovereign nations/tribes
- Breaking boundaries—encourage linkages
- If 0 to grade 3, need more OSPI funds pulled out
- Must address local problems because all kids, families and services are local
- Careful creating state system/agency that only addressed state level needs and perceptions

Q5-How do we balance the need to help providers and teachers grow professionally with being able to move quickly to protect child safety and health?

Group 1

- Health approach is to protect vulnerable populations and control certain behaviors—versus community development model.
 - Can these two approaches co-exist?
 - If same department, not same area of responsibility (avoid mixed messages)
 - Continuous improvement model; cut-off funding if no improvement or takes too long. Not enough resources
 - With vulnerable persons-must protect
 - Need mentors who are not regulators (technical assistance)

Q6-How do we improve transitions between early learning and K-12 and Higher Education)?

Group 1

- Wide variety in private kindergartens
- Ireland has standard secondary curriculum
- Make people talk and work together (primary teachers visit preschools)
- Schools co-locate with community centers and pre-k
- Regulate unlicensed preschools
- Certify preschools (voluntarily)

- Interagency agreements between school districts and early learning programs that get state funds
- Require transition agreements

Quality Rating System/Tiered Reimbursement

Q1-What should the goals of the quality rating system be?

- Improve the quality of care
- Quality Rating and Improvement System –for providers
- Inform parents’ decisions about child care
- Help kids be successful
- Easily understandable system by providers, parents, facilitators
- Parent education and parent support
- Parents want concrete information: Quality defined – parents empowered and informed
- Public awareness of quality care—the community needs to know
- Enhance working relationships between provider, parent, and child.
- Mentors important
- Parent interaction standard---parents engaged

Q2-Where does licensing fit into the system, i.e., should a provider get one star for being licensed? (Unlicensed are not in the system)

- ** Meet the MLR = 1 star
- Meet Health and safety rules = 1 star
- Are Head Start and ECEAP programs part of the QRS?

Q3-What should a five star (highest quality) program look like? What is the balance between best practice and what’s readily achievable?

- Look at notion of “endorsement” for specific areas
- Funds available to support movement up the quality rating scale??
- Don’t build a generic model
- Set up a system to facilitate 5 star care
- Quality is continually renewed
- Start with the outcomes wanted for the child; look at the provider’s strategies to achieve these outcomes.
- Don’t create disincentives for providers to take children who need more services

Q4-Should requirements be allowed to vary between child care centers and family child care homes so long as desired outcomes for children remain the same?

- Develop separate tracks for homes, centers, school-age care settings
- Achieve the same outcomes, recognize the difference in settings
- Remember children have similar needs
- Look at the skills needed
- Running a family home business is different than running a classroom

- Elements may differ but outcomes for children should be similar

Group Two

Tiered Reimbursement

- Should support the child, support the provider
- A question about lowering the eligibility limit (FPL) to be eligible to receive subsidies.
- Voucher system is now in use---move to a contract/voucher hybrid
- Perhaps possible to move the child from child care subsidy to an ECEAP part-day program if a parent loses her job, doesn't need full time child care
- Support for all providers could be useful: example--allow providers to access state purchasing pool for reductions in supply costs; offer free training, be creative!!
- Should preschools be incorporated into a QRS? Should a QRS step 2 include non-licensed caregivers in a QRS?

Q6-What should a five star (highest quality) program look like? What is the balance between best practice and what's readily achievable?

- "Best practice"
- It's not realistic to require BA's
- High quality plus comprehensive services
- Don't "water down" the five star
- Look at separate sets of standards for homes, school-age, centers
- 5 star---best practice plus comprehensive services
- Will need provider support to develop and implement
- Will need help with compensation to implement

Public Engagement and Outreach

Group 1—key thoughts

Paradigm shift

Inclusion-consensus

Understanding ELC

Importance of early learning

Agreement

Q1-What is the message?

- Birth to four are the most crucial years in life
- Why are we doing this?
- Describe community benefits
- Focus on different levels of community
- ALL means ALL children
- Partnerships supporting families
- Quality of care matters

- What are the resources?
- Parent information and education
- Investments—high dividends
- Collaborative efforts
- Where are we now? Where do we want to go?
- Strengths model
- Same facts, information, message (one page)
- Create excitement: credible spokespersons presenting in communities

Q2-Who are our audiences?

- Socio-economic
- Ethnic
- Faith-based
- Special needs
- Providers
- Parents
- Private/business sectors
- Mass media
- Free media

Q3-How do we build credibility with stakeholders and key decision makers?

- Local representatives
- Outreach
- Develop relationships
- Authentic
- Cultural relevance
- Equitable leadership

Q4-What are our dissemination strategies?

- Partnerships
- Grassroots
- Media
- Ongoing-long term
- Resource and referral network
- Simple message for trusted messengers
- Send out individuals to associations and other meetings; get opinions
- Survey
- Community leaders and elders
- Community health representatives
- Libraries
- Non-traditional
- Grocery stores
- Communications

Group 2: key messages—

Build on existing communities & expertise

*Develop well-honed message that resonates for multiple audiences in multiple languages
(return on investment; start behind, stay behind, state being competitive)*

Revisit/revive early brain development

Focus and prioritize

Reach out to communities—dialogue/feedback loop

Accountability and evaluation

Q1 & 2-Who are our audiences?

- Parents, taxpayers, voters
- Providers
- Funders
- Public-private funders
- Policy makers
- Business
- Educators
- Educational institutions
- Law enforcement

Messages

- We all have a stake in early learning and early learning quality
 - Kids succeed in school—reduced remediation, reduced criminal justice
 - Return on public investment
 - Competitiveness of workforce/economy
 - Equality-services, access, universality
 - 90% of brain developed birth to five
 - Children who come to school behind stay behind
- Different messages for caregivers/family-increase quality of care for all; increase compensation, support and reward for high quality care; family wage job

Q3-How do we build credibility?

- Convey (positively) what early childhood services are
- Benchmarks (measures)
- Diverse champions for influence
- Evaluate outcomes (positive for children); accountability
- Frame messages in factual way-clear, concise
- Consistency in message
- Test message on stakeholders (parents, providers, policy makers, key decision makers)
- K-12/Higher education--buy-in and coordination
- Deliver the goods—do what you say
- Keep it simple, memorable. Resonate. (E.g., “don’t mess with Texas” or “Click it or ticket”)

Q4-What are our dissemination strategies?

- Faith community: meet people where they pray

- Paid campaign for long-term memorable message?
- Born Learning partnership
- Multi-pronged for diverse audiences
- Build public will/create “3rd rail” for de-funding
- Focus/prioritize
- See what worked/what didn’t—why doesn’t momentum last?
- Sustained campaign (see affordable housing community models—what’s in it for you?); layers: you, community

Engage community/organizations/leaders

- Go to communities
- Speakers bureau—reflect audiences
- Socio-economic/minority organizations
- Stay on message—core message is consistent
- “Bubble-up” local expertise for mobilization
- Tap into Existing community groups
 - Family support centers
 - PTA
 - Rotary
 - Lions Clubs
 - Community Networks
 - Community clinics/pediatricians
 - Churches
 - YMCA/YWCA
 - United Way
 - Schools
 - Goodwill
 - Boys & Girls Clubs
 - Non-profits
- Engage the everyday contact/friends/spread the message
- Revisit brain development findings—build on this
- Child profile mailing list
- Multilingual materials/outreach
- Hospitals/birth centers